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CHINESE COMMUNIST THEORIST OUTLINES PRINCIPLES  
FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE REVOLUTION

Ai Ssu-ch'i

This article originally entitled "A Step Forward," by Ai Ssu-ch'i, an outstanding Chinese Communist interpreter of Marxism, reviews past progress in self-education and lays down the principles for future developments in the theory of the Chinese revolution. The author recommends the study of the theories of Marx and Lenin to understand their essential meaning, but stresses Mao's concept that those theories must be applied to the Chinese revolutionary movement and, from that application, methods must be deduced for the solution of the theoretical and strategic problems of the Chinese.

It is interesting to note that only Marx, Lenin, and Mao are cited as authorities in doctrinal theories and principles, and Stalin is mentioned only casually. There seems to be an inference that Chinese Communist theory owes little or nothing to Stalin but lives and develops through its own experience.

A year has elapsed since the people of China started the unprecedented task of national reconstruction under the leadership of the new government. In many respects the life of the people presents a new appearance. Fundamental changes have occurred not only in the political and economic life of the nation, but also in thinking and ideology as a result of self-education and self-criticism on a large scale.

In addition to the Rectification Movement, which was launched by the Chinese Communist Party after the Third Session of the National Conference to eliminate bureaucracy and high-handedness, a program of self-education and self-criticism has been initiated among the people in political indoctrination classes in the various areas. This program is also being carried out in

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political theory studies in colleges, high schools, and government organizations, in the study clubs and meetings organized by the various political party organs, and in other forms of organization for study purposes among the people.

Are self-education and self-criticism necessary? There is no question but that they are. It is impossible to build up a new nation without a new people armed with the new ideology and new ways of thinking. Such people are not born from heaven, but grow out of the old society. Indeed, the people of new China, with the exception of some old cadres who have long participated in the revolution, still carry with them the undesirable influences from the old country and society. Unless, by constant self-education and self-criticism, we get rid of these erroneous ways of thinking and these bad influences left over from the old reactionary regime, we will fail to realize that we are now the masters of our country, ready to devote ourselves to national reconstruction.

Those who are suspicious of the purpose of self-education and self-criticism, oppose the Rectification Movement, and are themselves obsessed with self-satisfaction, do not really recognize the righteous cause of the new government and are not fit for the work of building up the country in the interest of the people. On the other hand, we are wrong if we view self-education and self-criticism as actions against an enemy to be carried out by force. Instead, they are the responsibility of the people to be carried out by thought-provoking and self-awakening methods.

Self-education and self-criticism by the people is in accord with the theories of Marx and Lenin and the principles of Mao Tse-tung. In fact, the magnificent national reconstruction of the past year has also been accompanied by the most enthusiastic study of the theories of Marx and Lenin and the principles of Mao Tse-tung. Let us now examine what we have accomplished in theoretical study up to the present, and how we may go one step further.

Generally speaking, our theoretical study has only gone through the preliminary stage. There is still a long way to go, and much effort is needed to advance.

In the areas which were liberated much earlier, courses on social development have been emphasized: historical materialism, political economics, the theory of the new people's democracy, and other related subjects. The result is that many people have systematically established a new viewpoint and have begun to know the philosophy of life and the world views of Marx and Lenin, which criticize the old ideas and their fallacious implications. In the newly liberated areas, the people, the newly recruited cadres, and the intellectuals have begun to understand better the theory of the Chinese Revolution and of the Chinese Communist Party, the principles of Mao Tse-tung, and are fundamentally rejecting the influences of the KMT's reactionary propaganda of the past. Some cadres which have participated in the revolution for years and are experienced in party struggle have come to a better understanding of the various policies of the Chinese Revolution. Some of them are capable of self-criticism and are able to discriminate between profitable and unprofitable experiences.

In short, the study of theory has solved some of the confusion arising out of the transition from the old way of thinking to the new; it has improved the understanding of revolutionary policies, and has enabled some people to conduct adequate self-criticism. This is what has been achieved after a few courses of study, in the areas which were liberated early.

What is the reason for saying that, in view of what has been achieved, these studies have only taken their first step? Why must greater efforts be made to take a step forward? It is because present accomplishments are still far from the goal set for our entire program of studying the theories of Marx and Lenin, although this first step is quite an achievement.

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The study of the theories of Marx and Lenin must be brought into relation with reality. Study is to be conducted by finding solutions for specific problems instead of pursuing purely static theories. Why must we study theory through practical problems? What are these problems? The answers to these questions depend on the actual circumstances surrounding the study. No one formula is applicable to all circumstances.

We must not choose at random those problems which either are irrelevant or beyond the understanding of the students. For instance, work revision or the solving of practical problems could never be a proper step in improving the understanding of people in newly liberated areas who are just beginning their studies of the theories of Marx and Lenin, for such problems do not exist in their minds. But it is quite possible to ask them to criticize the traditional ways of thinking and the reactionary elements in daily life left behind by the former regime, because such problems are quite obvious to them.

For the same reason, it is profitable to suggest that our cadres, which have wider experience, study the revolutionary policies at various stages and analyze their experience at the time they began their studies of the theories of Marx and Lenin. It was by following such a procedure of assigned study that the first stage of our study plan achieved some progress. Such an approach of bringing study closer to reality can be applied to most areas, whether the people there are just starting or whether they are already engaged in the study of the theories of Marx and Lenin. However, what we have achieved so far is only elementary knowledge. It would be a mistake to stop making further efforts.

The purpose of studying the theories of Marx and Lenin is not to memorize the revolutionary principles and use them as substitutes for old ideas. Rather, it is to understand the propositions, principles, and methods of approach of the theories of Marx and Lenin and apply them in developing a theory of Chinese revolution and in guiding the strategy of the revolution. These principles also serve as guiding principles in work and study. In other words, we should analyze scientifically the actual circumstances surrounding us, discover the relationships, and deduce general principles from them to serve as guidance.

The theories of Marx and Lenin are nothing but a body of sound principles derived objectively from existing reality. Relating theory to practice means the scientific deduction of a theory from actual conditions, on the one hand, and the use of that theory to guide our practice, on the other. In studying the theories of Marx and Lenin we intend primarily to understand their essential meaning as it is closely connected with reality.

Chairman Mao discussed this approach to the study of the theories of Marx and Lenin in his speech Improving Our Study, in which he said: "With such an attitude we are studying the theories of Marx and Lenin. We must apply these theories to the actual Chinese revolutionary movement and from them we must deduce methods for the solution of the theoretical and strategic problems confronting the Chinese revolution.

"We must analyze the real circumstances beyond the boundary of our district, hsien, province, and country, and deduce from changing events the inherent principles or governing rules, rather than unfounded propositions, to be our guidance for action."

Having such an attitude, let us examine our achievement of the past year. Could the people who merely studied the elementary theories of Marx and Lenin grasp the essential methods in solving the theoretical and strategic problems of the Chinese Revolution? Could they start with events far removed from their own district, province, and country, then discover the proper relations among them, deducing the general principles to be used as guidance for action? It would seem that they could not. That is completely or almost completely beyond

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their ability. More studies must be made before we can reach our ultimate goal. What we now have achieved in our first step will be completely wasted if it is not followed by advanced study

In this connection, we would like briefly to discuss the Rectification Movement. The purpose of the present Rectification Movement is to correct the fallacious bureaucracy and high-handedness which are widespread among cadres and party members in general. Such erroneous attitudes are in direct opposition to the theories of Marx and Lenin because people who commit such mistakes are separating theory from reality, thus getting away from the masses. Instead of closely studying the living conditions of the masses to discover general principles as guides for action, they treat the people with high-handed and arbitrary methods.

To get rid of bureaucracy and high-handedness, it then becomes necessary to assign the cadres and party members in general to study party documents and conduct self-criticism, to analyze the actual circumstances surrounding the people and themselves, to grasp the fundamental relationships among all the problems involved, and to use them as rules of conduct. Therefore, the purpose of the Rectification Movement is not only to correct the erroneous attitudes, but also to raise the level of understanding of the theories of Marx and Lenin on the part of cadres and party members. However, because the level at which the cadres and members understand the theories of Marx and Lenin is generally low, we must carry our study one step further.

Where shall we take our next step in studying the theories of Marx and Lenin?

After the preliminary study in which the cadres complete courses on the history of social development and political economics, they should be assigned certain books among the 12 books which everyone has to study, such as the Foundations of Leninism, the Communist Manifesto, and Socialism ... Utopian and Scientific. We may assign the writings of Lenin and Stalin on socialist reconstruction to workers who participate in economic reconstruction projects in order to supply practical guidance in their work. Cadres with higher ability to learn should finish the 12 assigned books systematically. In the process of studying, one must always bear in mind the principles of Mao Tse-tung, the theoretical and strategic problems confronting the Chinese Revolution, the political platform of new China, and the various tasks facing us.

However, this is not to say that a mere perusal of the 12 assigned books means that one has mastered the theories of Marx and Lenin. A correct attitude is a crucial factor for successful study. Without a sound and correct attitude, nothing is achieved, whether one reads 12, or more than 12 books. In this connection, we must not forget two things:

First, we must not for a single moment forget the essential meaning of the theories of Marx and Lenin so that we can use these theories to analyze facts and determine what attitude to take and what method to follow in solving real problems. As we grasp the essence of the theories, we can discover the inherent principles governing the events which surround us, and use these principles to solve our daily problems. We must oppose the erroneous attitude with which some people hope to find a ready-made formula from the theories of Marx and Lenin, expecting to apply it directly and simply to their work. Are there people among us who have this doctrinaire attitude? Yes. There are a number of them. For instance, we often hear people asking such questions as:

"What bearing do the 12 books have upon my work?"

"What is the use of studying them?"

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"Does the study of the 12 books help to complete my tax collection assignment?"

To those who really know how to get the essential meaning from the theories of Marx and Lenin, such questions do not arise, because they can find a close and valuable relationship between the study and the actual problems. Such questions arise only in the minds of those who follow the doctrinaire approach or those who are merely spectators in learning. Certainly they can get only a negative answer to the questions they ask. These people take an unyielding attitude from the very beginning; they ask these questions because they anticipate a negative answer which they can then use as an argument in refusing to study. In other words, if they really intended to study seriously, they would not begin by asking such questions because one can never find a ready answer to a single actual problem in the books of Marx and Lenin.

At the Seventh Session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1926, Stalin recounted a story which he had heard from a Swedish guild socialist. It serves as a valuable warning to those who are idle spectators in learning. The story was told by Stalin as follows:

"These events took place in Crimea during the rebellion of the Army and Navy. The Army and Navy representatives told the members of the Social Democratic Party that they had agreed to rebel against the Tsar and that since everything was ready for action, they were awaiting further instructions from the party. After being silent for a moment, the party members replied that they could not solve the problem of the rebellion unless a special meeting was held to discuss the whole matter. The Navy representatives said that they were ready for action, but that they would certainly fail if they did not obtain approval and instructions from the Social Democratic Party. After the representatives left, the party organized a meeting to discuss the rebellion. They consulted the first, the second, and finally the third volume of Capital. They were looking for Marx's instructions on Crimea, particularly on the Sevastopol rebellion. In all three volumes of Capital not a single instruction was found on Crimea or on the Sevastopol rebellion! (Laughter) None was found by scrutinizing the other writings of Marx and Engels either. (Laughter) Then, what should they do? The sailors of the Navy were there awaiting a definite answer. Finally, the Social Democrats had to admit that they could not give any advice to the Navy and the Army. 'Thus, the rebellion of the Army and Navy failed,' the Swedish comrade concluded his story. (Laughter)"

Such a fallacious attitude, exemplified by these Social Democrats, may exist in various forms and in different degrees in the minds of many people, whether they are conscious of it or not. Such an attitude would not do too much harm to those students who are just beginning to study the elementary theories of Marx and Lenin. But the habit of looking for ready formulas in books can be a great handicap to the advanced students who are expected to apply these theories to practical problems. Unless such an attitude is corrected, we cannot take a step forward.

In the second place, we should emphasize self-instruction and not rely on meetings, discussions, informal talks, and lectures as the preferred method of studying the theories of Marx and Lenin. The essence of these theories can never be found in verbal forms or grasped through casual talk. It may only be learned by hard study, by contemplation on the part of each individual student, and by referring to reality. Only through such intensive study, individually conducted, could we ever understand the attitudes, views, and methods of approach which were so successfully used by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin in analyzing various problems.

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There is not a Marxist in history whose success did not depend on self-instruction rather than group discussion, meetings, and lectures. The emphasis on self-instruction does not necessarily imply that we are getting away from the practical problems and living conditions of the people. It is equally wrong to seclude oneself from the masses and reality and, as the old saying goes, "shut our ears to things beyond the window, and study wholeheartedly the books by great men."

We must establish a suitably close relationship between our studies of the theories of Marx and Lenin and our observation of actual problems and the life of the people. This is essential to the mastery of the theories of Marx and Lenin. It is because we expect to apply our knowledge to actual problems that we must put greater emphasis on individual study and investigation. Of course, it is still indispensable to make judicious use of meetings, informal talks, and lectures. But unless we study very hard by ourselves, we can hardly make the theories of Marx and Lenin our own, or we may, perhaps, merely be able to recite passages without knowing their essence.

There is no definite method of study. It all depends on the ability and experience of the individual. The emphasis on self-instruction applies primarily to advanced students, especially those who have finished reading the 12 books. For those whose level of understanding is still low, it is desirable that they be taught several elementary books in class. It is still necessary to use group meetings, discussion, and self-criticism in the training classes where thought indoctrination is only beginning. However, we ought to consider it our essential job to stimulate independent thinking and self-instruction among the beginners. We should give them enough time to do their own study. Indeed, what we oppose is the practice of filling the schedule with lectures and meetings as is done in some places, or spending  $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 hours daily in discussion or in talks which have nothing to do with study, because, in such cases, virtually no time is left for the students to do their own studying. Let us ask ourselves, is this a proper study method? (If it can be called a "method" at all). Can we hope to achieve anything from such a method?

Self-instruction requires competent leadership and proper organization. Schools and government organizations in the various areas should devise measures to give proper assistance to those advanced students who have finished reading the 12 assigned books. Such assistance would consist, for instance, of arrangements facilitating the students' own studies, allowing them sufficient time for such studies. We may use other methods to teach the beginners, based on our past experience, but it is desirable to set up lecture classes if possible. In short, we should correct the erroneous attitude of replacing individual study with meetings and lectures, as is done in some places.

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